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THE GAZETTE, MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 2004 PREVIEW | FRANCOFOLIES D5

REVIEW

Intelligent, observant stories

FRENCH SINGER JEANNE CHERHAL LETS GO

Has uncanny forte for integrating words into adventurous, invigorating melodies

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Introducing herself musically with a flowing piano flourish worthy of the Impressionists, Jeanne Cherhal eased her way into Deuxième fois par an, the title tune of her first album, on Wednesday night at Monument-National's Studio Hydro-Québec. It quickly became apparent that we were in the presence of an intelligent young woman with an observant eye towards human relations and a comedic bunsaine.

A former philosophy student who turned to music half a dozen years ago, the 26-year-old from Nantes (only relatively recently moved to Paris) has attracted attention in a field crowded with young wannabes in la nouvelle chanson. She's obviously aware of the French songwriting heritage but, unlike a lot of the competition, she doesn't do postmodern music-hall (accordionists need not apply).

Melodic ebb and flow and freedom abound from her lips. Her winding storytelling tunes aren't easy to sing perfectly, so she just lets go. Un couple normal featured a tricky oscillating melody to match her acerbic view of the surprises that shape and break relationships.

Having opened for the likes of Thomas Fersen, Jacques Higelin or double-billed with Vincent Delerm, she finds herself on the Tot ou tard boutique label (distributed by Warner Music Canada), sympathetic to individualistic artists. Deuxe fois is a nuance-filled album that grows with each listen.

Slender in jeans, sneakers and an elegant black tank top (and not a speck of jewelry), her almond-shaped face broke into an easy smile after particularly demanding songs. There's a demurely natural elegant flow about her.

Stripped-down at the intimate Studio Hydro-Québec, accompanied by ultra-subtle guitarist Eric Lohrer, she showed an uncanny forte for integrating words into adventurous, invigorating melodies. She's a musical free spirit, full of pirouettes and rhapsodies (even taking a turn or two on bass).

A surprise guest on Wednesday's opening night was Albin de la Simone, another rising young charmer (who was to play yesterday in the outdoor Nouvelle Chanson series), dueting on a French version of the Frank & Nancy Sinatra kitsch classic Somethin' Stupid.

Cherhal is a breath of fresh air, quite her own woman, and a young original in any language.

Jeanne Cherhal plays at Studio Hydro-Québec of Monument-National, 1182 St. Laurent Blvd, tonight and tomorrow at 10. Tickets are $16.71 at the box-office, (514) 871-2224, or though Admission, (514) 790-1245.

NOTES

C'est Extra for kitsch

MICHELE RICHARD A HIGHLIGHT

Le Cabaret's vintage French pop-a-thon expanded for FrancoFolies

The sight of a roomful of St-Laurent Blvd. rouis and carousers dancing wildly to 60s ye-yé hits from France and Quebec is one thing. But the appearance last Friday at Le Cabaret of Michèle Richard, blonde local icon of that era in the midst of a reality show comeback, with TV cameras in tow, was quite another. The monthly dance-a-thon devoted to vintage French pop, dubbed C'est Extra (after the name of a 1969 Leo Ferré hit), expanded to include the two weekends of Les FrancoFolies. It added kitschy Quebec discs to its menus of Françoise Hardy, Gainsbourg, Dalida and "frenchy jazzy swing," and needed the queen of kétaine's cooperation in displaying her photo in the club. According to publicist Marie-Christine Champagne, getting Pierre Lalonde's likeness on stage was less complicated. "Just make sure it's a good photo," said the perennially young Dick Clark of Quebec pop.

JOHN MAHONEY THE GAZETTE
FrancoFolies French rocker M at the Spectrum on Tuesday evening

C'est Extra takes place at Le Cabaret Music-Hall, 2111 St-Laurent Blvd., tonight and tomorrow starting around 11 p.m. Tickets are $8 at the box-office (514) 845-2014, or through Admission (514) 790-1245.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Local songbird Maryse Letarte, who launched her sophomore album Le motif (Disques Rococo/Select) with a short set at Le Cabaret last Monday, plays the main Ford Focus stage tonight at 6 p.m. For artists who don't get vast amounts of radio airplay, the festival is their biggest chance to move discs at Archambeault, which operates a booth on Ste-Catherine St. near St-Urbain devoted to artists playing at the Francos. However, the large mauve-pink image of M dominates near the cash register – his three-night stand at the Spectrum has his latest album Qui de nous deux (Capitol-Virgin/EMI) flying off the shelves.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Today at the festival

Les Petites Tounes, 3 p.m. at Chapiteau Le Lat. Free.
Folies Fersiens, 4 p.m., Le Monde Forain Lato-Québec. Free.
Leif Vollebeck, 5 p.m., Le Monde Forain Le Lat. Free.
Maryse Letarte, 6 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
Folies Fersiens, 7 p.m., Le Monde Forain Lato-Québec. Free.
Danny Boudreau, 7 p.m., Le Monde Trad Desjardins. Free.
Kate et Anna McGarrigle, 7 p.m., Spectrum. Tickets: $34.50.
Marie Philippe, 7 p.m., Cruise concert onboard the Cavalier Maxim. Boarding begins at 6. Tickets: $52.90.
Dan Bigras Solo, 7:30 p.m., Cabaret Music-Hall. Tickets: $25.50.
Jacques Michel "Rapper", 8 p.m., Salle Wilfrid Pelletier. Tickets: $34.50 to $49.50.
Fermin Muguruza, 8 p.m., Zone Bleue. Free.
Hugh Lapointe, 8 p.m., Le Monde Forain Le Lat. Free.
Sara Alexander, 8 p.m., Le Monde Multiculturel. Free.
Laurent Vesky, 8:30 p.m., Club Soda. Tickets: $39.50.
Vulgaires Machins and Capitaine Révolte, 9 p.m., Metropolis. Tickets: $14.50.
Caroline Néron, 9 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
Violons, 9 p.m., Le Monde Trad Desjardins. Free.
Ghislain Poirier et Séba, 9 p.m. Le Monde Hip-hop Solo. Free.
Jeanne Cherhal, 10 p.m., Monument-National. Tickets: $14.50.
Vendor and le Band Bass Ma Boom, 10 p.m., Zone Bleue. Free.
Hugh Lapointe, 10 p.m., Le Monde Forain Le Lat. Free.
Sara Alexander, 10 p.m., Le Monde Multiculturel. Free.
Cali and Ursula Deslexis, 11 p.m., Spectrum. Tickets: $9.50.
Caroline Néron, 11 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
DJ Champion, midnight, Le Shag' Saxo du Métropolis. Free.
FrancoFolies runs through Sunday. For details, go to www.francofolies.com or call (514) 876-8989 or toll-free 1-(888)-444-9114.

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